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BETTER PLANTS

God's first gift to man was a Beautiful Garden

VOLUME IV | APRIL, 1926 | NUMBER 2

Rock-Garden Construction Simplified

Rock-gardens, with their many possibilities, are one of the most interesting types of gardens possible. Not only can they be constructed on a comparatively small piece of ground, but they can be made to display a far greater range of effect than any other type of garden.

Rock plants at home on a rocky slope. Many unsightly areas may be made as beautiful as this garden

In Europe, particularly in England, the rock-garden is an established institution. We, in America, have comparatively little knowledge of it, and do not realize what an important factor it is in the beautification of home grounds. There are a few notable rock-gardens in this country, but mostly on large estates. For the most part, America has confined its rock-garden vision principally to the so-called rockery.

Now a rockery, even if it has many good intentions lying behind it, is not a rock-garden. It is generally a number of stones stuck in a mound of soil, or a circular array of stones filled in with soil. On the other hand, a rock-garden is a garden of rocks and always should be naturalistic in effect. Its rules are of Nature herself. Nature is never haphazard and, therefore, it would be a grave mistake for any enthusiast to attempt the construction of a rock-garden by throwing stones about in an incoherent heap. A rock-garden whether it be natural or constructed by the hands of man, should never be artificial as to appearance.

Selecting a Site

The site for a rock-garden should be clear, clean and open. Avoid dense shade, as most rock plants prefer a sunny location. Construct it as far from the house as possible. Where nearness to the home is necessary, it can be screened with shrubbery. Never place it in the open lawn; the edge of the lawn or some corner is better; a bank sloping down from a lawn is preferable to either. Another possible site is a bank on each side of steps leading from one lawn level to another.

A rock pile converted into a Rock-Garden. Note the existing irregularity

When the site has been selected, a rough pencil plan should be made. Measure the area which is to be devoted to the garden and lay it out on cross-section paper, allowing one small square to equal a square foot. Next, if your property is in the country or city suburb where a large area can be devoted to the garden, figure out a good entrance and, if possible, an exit; then outline the main path which should be as meandering as possible. If the property is in the city suburb where the garden area is small and where paths, entrances and exits cannot be added, the builder should provide pronounced bays or recesses.

In selecting rocks, one should look in his own vicinity if possible. Use natural stones—never use artificial material of any kind. Weather-beaten granite is the best material. Moss-covered stones from the bed of streams are desirable. Stones or boulders, as large as can be conveniently moved, may be used. All should vary in size and shape. Building should begin with these, NOT with the soil. Place the boulders first to correspond with the plan which you have made. These should be placed with the largest surface to the ground. Place the stones with as much care as you do the plants themselves. The largest ones should be located first and smaller ones grouped in combination to look like a natural out-cropping of rocks.

Differences in elevation and contour are very desirable. Select the high spots in your design and work around these as features. Next, fill each crevice with soil, which should be a prepared mixture of good soil, small pebbles and well-rotted manure. This should be packed firmly, watering if possible so as to make it settle. Add more filling soil when it has settled. When this is done, proceed with the second layer, placing the rocks with the front edge slightly back from that of the lower row, in order to form a slope as shown in the accompanying cross-section diagram Number 1. Then proceed as before until the desired height is reached. At no place should the soil be less than 3 inches between stones. To secure this distance, small stones may be placed between them as shown in diagram No. 2. There should, however, be a continuous passage of soil from the front of the stones

"A" to the solid filling of earth "B." This run should be sloped downward.

There should be plenty of moisture stored behind the rocks, yet not an excess. The garden should be well drained, and, if any doubt exists, a drainage bed of from 8 to 10 inches should be made of cinders before laying the stones.

Choosing the Plants

The final consideration is selecting and placing the rock-garden plants. Material should be selected and planted so that at the end of two growing seasons all of the soil will be concealed. The main thing is that there should be beauty as a whole. A good rule to go by is to "plant clusters here and single plants there," but nothing should be allowed to so over-run the rock work that no stones are in sight. The plants to be selected may be grouped into three classes: First, those types which form a carpet of bloom; second, those which have a blanket foliage but the flower stalks rise higher; and third, taller plants that may be worked in as single specimens or in small groups.

GROUP No. 1
(Plant types that form a carpet of bloom)

Aubrietia purpurea	Phlox divaricata
Cerastium tomentosum	Phlox subulata, in var.
Dianthus deltoides	Plumbago larpentae
Dwarf Sedum, in var.	Saponaria ocymoides
Gypsophila repens	Sempervivum, in var.
Helianthemum	Thymus atrosanguinea
Iberis sempervirens	Veronica repens
Myosotis palustris	Vinca minor
Pachysandra	Viola, in variety
Phlox amoena	

GROUP No. 2
(Plants with blanket foliage but high flower stalk)

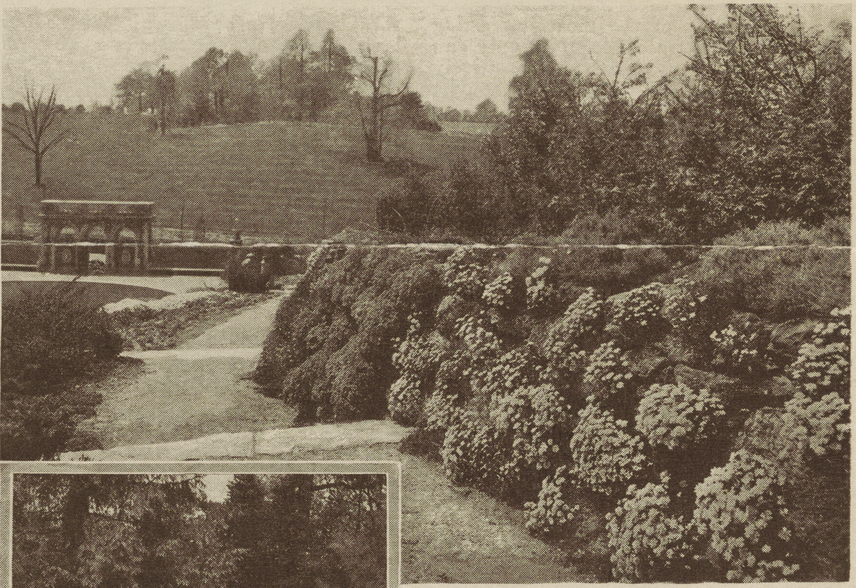
Alyssum saxatile	Limonium latifolium
Arabis alpina	Lychnis viscaria
Campanula carpatica	Muscari botryoides
Chionodoxa lucifer	Primula, in variety
Crocuses	Ranunculus acris fl.-pl.
Dianthus Allwoodi	Saxifrage, in variety
Dianthus plumarius	Scilla sibirica
Dicentra formosa	Snowdrops
Geranium, in variety	Tiarella cordifolia
Geum, in variety	Tulips (single and cottage types)
Heuchera, in variety	Veronica incana
Hosta, in variety	
Iris pumila	

GROUP No. 3
(Taller plants used as specimens or in small groups)

Anemone japonica	Lilium tigrinum
Anemone hupehensis	Linum perenne
Anthemis tinctoria	Platycodon grandiflorum
Aquilegia	Polygonatum commutatum
Artemisia frigida	Single Peonies (herbaceous or tree)
Dicentra spectabilis	Tradescantia virginiana
Echinops ritro	Yucca filamentosa
Hemerocallis, in var.	
Irises (German, Japanese or Siberian)	
Lilium speciosum	

A few evergreens each of Pinus mughus, low creeping Junipers such as Juniperus depressa or Juniperus sabina, can be used in the garden for accent points. Use them informally where mass and winter color is desired. A few ferns should always be used somewhere within the garden.

Plants in this list cover all seasons of the year, but in selecting varieties it is better to select a greater number of a few varieties than a few plants of many varieties.



(Upper) A rough wall transformed into a wall garden. Crevices filled with good soil in which rock-plants were set.
(Left) A rock-garden on a natural slope. Crevices cleaned and filled with soil adapted to plant growth.
(Bottom) A path through the rock-garden. Similar gardens on a smaller scale may be constructed for any size property.

There are two methods of planting the material. Plant simultaneously with the laying of the stones or after the rock work has been completed. The simultaneous planting is the better method if possible, for in this way larger plants can be used, as the roots will reach the base soil immediately.

So far, we have written for those who have to gather the rocks from various parts of the place or who have to bring them from the outside. But many grounds, especially those of country places, have their own rocks or rocky slopes; this makes the choice of the site easy and oftentimes makes a comparatively inexpensive treatment of a difficult situation on your grounds. Those blessed with such good luck should clear the crevices of small stones, weeds and debris and replace with good soil. When this is done, planting should be carried on as previously suggested for the owner who imports the stones.—D. G. NOWERS, L. A., Landscape Department, Farr Nursery Company.

Weed Optimism

Don't be an optimist about weeds. They may look "all right so far," but "all right so far" is what the prime optimist said as he fell past the tenth story window. Never forget that one minute's weeding during balmy April saves an hour's torture during scorching August.

WISE AND OTHERWISE

The former "Now and Then" column is to become a permanent part of Better Plants. As such, it requires a new title. "Wise and Otherwise," as a title, appears becomingly modest and doesn't tie one down to "wee hours" of "heavy" composition. It may now be excusable for the editor to tell a story or to crack a joke, provided they are new or original.

A Story

Our first story has to do with a man who some years ago acquired a wistaria through rather strenuous sales effort on our part. At that time, he thought $2.50 was rather much for a vine. The other week he called us for advice on the construction of a permanent trellis for the wistaria. His ideas called for an expenditure of from $25 to $30. We told him so. His reply was, "I don't care. I wouldn't part with that wistaria for a hundred dollars." Tact repulsed the urge to remind him of his protest against the original cost and the short time in which the value had increased 4,000 per cent.

When plants come into action and maturity, hardly any price will induce the owner to part with them. The first cost has been forgotten.

The first cost in plants, more than in anything else, is of least consideration. Quality, in the form of size, shape, trueness, root growth and stamina, is everything. Nothing is more disappointing to the real gardener than a sickly plant. Nothing more delightful than a vigorous one.

Man's Best Friend

Three bird-baths in summer and two feeding stations in winter are standing invitations for birds to linger near the editor's office window. The erection and maintenance of such hostelries is the most profitable investment ever made by the Farr Nursery. Birds are the best insecticide in creation. Man can spray expensively and intermittently, but to the birds is left the big fight of general and continuous pest extinction. Are we helping them?

Refer to the game laws of your state and see whether your law makers are protecting the farmer, the plant lover and home owner, or whether they are guided by the demands of organized sportsmen.

Test your children to find out whether your school authorities are educating them to the fact that human life depends upon the success of birds in checking insect pests.

Send Me a Pound

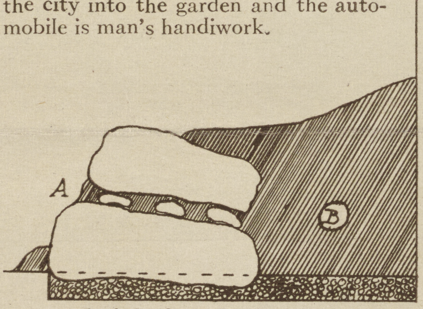
It isn't economical to buy coal in pound boxes, coal strike or not. Nor is it garden economy or good taste to use small plants by the "each." One iris costs 35 cents; five plants of that variety can be bought for 90 cents and everyone is happier.

Gardens lose that "hodge podgey" appearance when groups are planted instead of specimens. Nature didn't put one goldenrod here, one aster there, next a cowslip, then a buttercup, followed by a Jack-in-the-pulpit. Nature didn't spatter an irritating jumble or collection of plants across the landscape. Nature formed colonies and masses of plants and "good taste" is but an expression of naturalness.

Start your garden right by planting masses. Let the Botanical Garden do the collecting, unless you have a special and secluded location for the establishment of a plant collection.

Moving Cities

I've forgotten who wrote "God the first garden made; and the first city Cain." Nor do I believe that the writer was unable to justify the existence of cities as a part of our social structure. If his phrase was meant as a condemnation, I regret the quotation. If the city is Cain's bequest to humanity and the garden is God's work, then man is bringing the city to God. For the automobile has moved the city into the garden and the automobile is man's handiwork.



Rock-Gardens—Diagram No. 2

More Friends

Toads, Moles and Lady Bugs. These all are desirable garden tenants. Toads live on winged insects; moles on grubs and beetles; lady bugs on scale. An agricultural college estimates that a toad is worth $19 per year to a garden as an insect killer. Sometimes moles are a nuisance, but it pays to consider their effectiveness in increasing the death rate among grubs, slugs and beetles. Rather mole tunnels than a lawn infested with insect pests. Nor will moles bother a lawn or soil which does not require their attention.

And who wants to kill a lady bug?

Increasing Home Values

"Paint the surface and you save all. Plant the home grounds and increase the commercial value of your home." If you do not love plants for their own sake, then this commercial argument alone should encourage you to plant your premises. Such practical men as real estate developers realize the large returns on a small investment for plant material. It is now quite common and profitable for builders to plant their homes before selling them.

Hardy 'Mums

We were much taken by the following which appeared in a recent publication. "Of all flowers I do not love the chrysanthemum the best; yet I love it, for when it has gone there are no other flowers left in the world."

SUPERB PHLOX COLLECTION FOR 1926

For the first time since 1922, it is possible to offer a Phlox collection. Many of you will remember the old-time Superb and Novelty collections. Here is the 1926 collection, including only varieties which have survived the shake-up given the 140 varieties once included in the Farr list. They are all "best" varieties. Plant now for summer bloom.

Baron von Dedem. Pink	$0 35
Europa. White with crimson eye	30
Frau Anton Buchner. Pure white	30
F. G. von Lassburg. Tall white	30
Gen. Van Heutz. Red with white eye	30
Henri Murger. White with rose eye	30
Josephine Gerbeaux. White with red eye	30
Pharaon. Lilac-rose with white eye	30
Rosenberg. Violet with red eye	30
William Ramsey. Rosy purple	30
Total regular price	$3 10

One each of the above **for $3.**
Two each of the above **for $5.**
Three each of the above **for $7.**
Five each of the above **for $10.**

Prices include parcel post delivery. Payment after plants arrive in satisfactory condition. See 1926 catalog for descriptions and phlox culture.

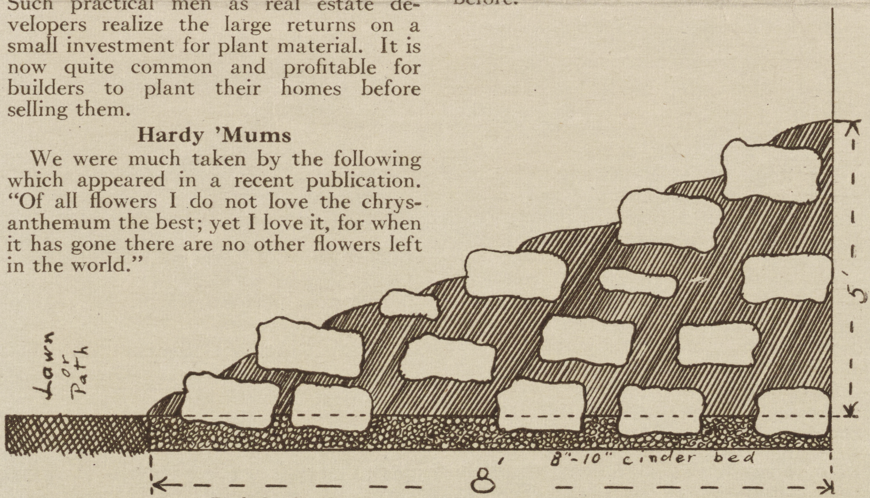
POLISHING BOXWOOD

The boxwood leaf-miner is found wherever boxwood grows. When the weather is favorable to him, the boxwoods suffer seriously. Take no chances with your garden diamonds and observe the following instructions:

Use one part cheap molasses to two parts of water. Add one part nicotine sulphate to every 250 parts of the mixture. Example: one gallon molasses, two gallons water and one-third gill nicotine sulphate or any 40 per cent nicotine preparation.

Spray every five days from April 25 to May 25. Spray thoroughly and forcefully, and strike the underside of the leaves.

For the rest of the year your boxwood will be fresher and greener than ever before.



Rock-Garden Construction Simplified—Diagram No. 1

BETTER PLANTS—April, 1926
Rock-Garden Edition

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Foreign Seed & Plant Introduction
ANSWERED

Several years ago I secured your "Rainbow Collection" of Iris. At a recent flower show I exhibited a collection of twelve varieties which took first prize . . The three large-flowered clematis which I received from you are lovely. Photo by Miss E. Elton Weaver, Newport News, Va.

TIMELY ITEMS

Delphinium Seed. (Wyomissing Hybrid.) For the first time in four years there is a limited supply of Wyomissing Hybrid Delphinium seed which can be spared to our customers. Prices, while the supply lasts: 50c. packets (1500 seeds); $1 packets (3500 seeds). *Supplied only with orders for other material.*

Viburnum Carlesii. May be planted in spring only. Is the choicest and has been the scarcest new shrub in many years. A few more left at $5 each, in 18 to 24-inch size. Express shipment only, and express charges to be paid by the buyer.

Plant Labels. Your plants deserve markers. You may be able to identify them, but can your children or your friends? See the 1926 Farr catalogue, inside back cover. Ask for a sample or send us a list of your garden favorites.

Insect Dusts. Dusting is handier, quicker and as effective as spraying. For $2 you will receive a Niagara Dust Gun, including a pound of All-in-one Dust. Use this outfit on insect pests or blight of any kind. Nine times out of ten it will be effective. The tenth time write us.

Rock Plants. Mr. Nowers, a member of the Farr Landscape Department, has ably and comprehensively discussed the Rock-Garden in this issue. For prices and descriptions of the varieties he recommends, see the 1926 Farr catalogue. If your copy is mislaid, ask for another.

Aquilegia. There are aquilegias and aquilegias, but the Mrs. Scott Elliott strain is without criticism or rival. A new crop of clean, strong plants is waiting in our nursery for shipment to American gardens. By May the supply will have dwindled. Order now and obtain first selection and early shipment. 35 cts. each; 5 or more at 25 cts. each; 25 or more at 18 cts. each.

Chrysanthemums. Plant them now and obtain bloom this fall. Every chrysanthemum we ship, and you care for, is guaranteed to bloom this fall and to be true to name. The shipping season for 1926 will close in a few weeks. See Farr catalog, pages 28, 29, and 30.

APPRECIATION SPECIAL FOR APRIL, 1926

As explained in the February-March issue of BETTER PLANTS, there will be an Appreciation Special in each issue of BETTER PLANTS for 1926.

If you have previously ordered Farr plants, this offer is open to you. If not, you can obtain the "special" by ordering at least $3 worth of other plants at regular catalogue prices.

Achillea ptarmica, The Pearl	Chrysanthemum, Alaska	Hosta lancifolia
Anthemis tinctoria	Eryngium amethystinum	Lythrum, Brightness
Boltonia asteroides	Helianthus atrorubens	Tradescantia virginica
Centaurea montana		

For descriptions, see pages 42 and 43 of the 1926 catalogue.

(*a*) **One each of above,** amounting to $3, **for $2.75.**
(*b*) **Two each of above,** amounting to $6, **for $3.50.**
(*c*) **Three each of above,** amounting to $9, **for $4.50.**
(*d*) **Five each of above,** amounting to $11, **for $6.50.**

Prices include parcel-post delivery to your door. Plants are guaranteed to be satisfactory and to arrive in good condition. Offer expires May 1, 1926.

FARR'S 1926 IRIS COLLECTIONS

Culture Collection—No. 2

8.3 **Archeveque.** Velvety purple	$0 35
8.1 **Cam**[illegible] ...ded violet	35
8.0 **Col.** [illegible] ...dy crimson	35
8.0 **Fair**[illegible] ...ed blue	35
7.8 **Eldorado** Yellowish heliotrope and purple	35
7.5 **Fro.** Yellow and brown	35
7.3 **Her Majesty.** Pink	35
8.2 **Lohengrin.** Cattleya-rose	35
8.1 **Ma Mie.** White, blue reticulations	35
7.3 **Mandraliscæ.** Lavender-purple	35
8.0 **Nine Wells.** Violet and purple	35
8.1 **Trojana.** Pale blue	35

The above 12 Irises, if bought separately, amount to $4.20. Collection price, **parcel post prepaid, $3.25.** No Iris discount on collections.

Classic Collection—No. 4

Assyrian. Violet and yellow contrast	$1 00
8.4 **Anna Farr.** Delicate bluish white	1 00
8.8 **B. Y. Morrison.** Large; lavender-violet	1 00
Caporal. Large; reddish violet	1 00
Cecile Minturn. Large; pink	1 00
Commodore. Grand violet-blue	1 00
7.9 **Dorman.** Reddish violet	1 00
E. H. Jenkins. Steel-blue-purple	1 00
8.8 **Halo.** Lavender-blue	1 00
9.6 **Lent A. Williamson.** Giant; blue and purple	1 00
Leone Trenance. Purple and pale lavender	1 00
8.3 **Seminole.** Rich velvety crimson	1 00

The above 12 Irises, if bought separately, amount to $12. Collection price, **parcel post prepaid, $9.** No Iris discount on collections.

Culture Collection and Classic Collection combined for $12.

Complete description of these Irises, and many other varieties, will be found in our 1926 catalogue. If you do not have a copy, write us—we shall be glad to forward one promptly.

Bertrand H. Farr—Wyomissing Nurseries Company
1250 Garfield Avenue, Wyomissing, Penna.